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MEMORANDUM

Israel: Keeping Dayan In Line?

Secret

7 December 1970

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Approved For Release 2006/09/25 : CIA-RDP79R00967A000300010006-2

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Israel: Keeping Dayan in Line?*

SUMMARY

The normally outspoken Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, will be in the US on December 11 with authorization to speak on behalf of the Israeli Cabinet. Dayan's official status requires that he adhere to Cabinet guidelines in official discussions with US Government leaders. Moreover, his freedom of public expression on sensitive issues is also circumscribed by his status -- though his position and personality guarantee him ample press coverage even if he abides strictly by the rules of the game. For the other members of the Israeli Cabinet, official sanction is designed to serve two purposes: to deter Dayan from pressing his own policies as if they were official, and to limit his freedom to use the US trip as a vehicle to promote his own domestic political fortunes.

* This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of National Estimates.

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DISCUSSION

1. Moshe Dayan will leave Israel for the US with the government's permission to hold political discussions with members of the US Government. In accordance with Israeli custom, this means that what he says in official talks must stay within guidelines sanctioned by the Cabinet. By giving Dayan's US fund-raising tour an official, as well as a private, character, Israeli political leaders have done what they can to minimize the personal impact of Dayan both on US officials concerned with peace initiatives and on Israelis preparing to vote in a Labor Party election scheduled to follow on the heels of his visit.

Dayan's Role in Israel

2. When free of the constraints imposed by speaking for the government, Dayan shoots off ideas, quotable phrases, and opinions virtually non-stop; many of his more contentious statements make brief headlines and die away. Some of his notions, however, catch the fancy of the Israeli public and rapidly become part of the body of public opinion which the Israeli Government is at pains to reflect. Dayan's colleagues in the Cabinet are often discomfited by his very special position in

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the Israeli political constellation. His longstanding reputation as a highly skilled military man dedicated to preserving Israel's security, combined with his reputed contempt for political expediency, permits him to lead, rather than follow, public opinion to a far greater degree than most other Israeli politicians.

3. In recent months, Dayan's ability to get his own way has been dramatically demonstrated. His adamancy was instrumental in forcing the Israeli Government to withdraw on 6 September from the Jarring talks in response to Egyptian violations of the standstill provisions of the cease-fire agreement. By early November however, he was publicly advocating return to the Jarring talks. His volte-face was in part a reflection of growing Israeli conviction that some gesture must be made in the interests of obtaining a further extension of the cease-fire. As the first Israeli official to proclaim this necessity publicly, however, Dayan both hastened the change of public sentiment and reinforced his own image as a leader and shaper of that sentiment.

Political Backdrop

4. Not so coincidentally, most of Dayan's recent newsworthy statements have been made at rallies of the Israel

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Labor Party, to which he and most other important government leaders belong. The party is preparing for its first internal elections since it was formed in January 1968 by merger of MAPAI (the dominant faction headed by Mrs. Meir and Finance Minister Sapir), RAFI (Dayan's faction), and Achdut Avoda (headed by Dayan's arch rival, Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon). Delegates will be elected on December 13 for a convention now expected to take place about April 1971.

5. The convention will elect the members of the party's various executive arms. At stake are control of the labor federation and the Jewish Agency, as well as some enterprises such as newspapers, industries and agricultural settlements, which are dominated by the Labor Party. In the longer run, December's elections will help determine Mrs. Meir's eventual successor as Prime Minister. Dayan is a strong contender, but he has formidable rivals, particularly Sapir and Allon. The convention also will consider a draft constitution of the new party that will specify party procedures (e.g., for selection of candidates for national and local office). Thus it will determine whether the party will remain a machine run by the entrenched few or will become more open to younger faces and new ideas -- an option which the Israeli public associates with Dayan.

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6. It is impossible to estimate how 285,000 party members, acting under newly written rules, will vote next Sunday. Until a few weeks ago, however, political observers opined that Dayan had been losing ground to the Meir/Sapir faction because of his comparative neglect of everyday politics. His recent speeches are probably designed in part to reverse this trend. He has refrained from direct criticism of other Labor Party members, but he has reinforced his own claim to be both a rock of strength on Israel's security demands and flexible on the ways to seek peace.

7. Dayan's speeches have done much to revive public discussion of security -- his forte. As an issue, it had languished since the cease-fire. Israeli casualties had dropped off sharply, from 118 killed in the three months before the cease-fire to 23 killed during the first three months of the cease-fire period itself. Public announcements of the pledge of new US military assistance had reassured Israelis about the durability of their military superiority over the Arabs. Forthcoming credits from the US had postponed the prospect of economic austerity. Public discussion focused on such domestic issues as a sharp increase in prices, a wave of strikes, and the perennial quarrel between

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orthodox religious and secular interests. Without Dayan's contentious utterances, public discussion of the circumstances under which Israel would return to the Jarring talks probably would have been postponed until after the Labor Party elections -- a postponement that most of his competitors within the party would have ardently preferred.

8. Dayan's pronouncements are not, however, simply a cynical appeal for party votes. They reflect his convictions, which are consistent enough within his own frame of reference. Dayan has long believed that it is possible to deal with Arabs and that the first requirement is firmness. He is, therefore, less worried than most Israelis about including somewhat increased numbers of Arabs within Israel as a result of border changes. In a paternalistic way, he is personally kind, polite and relatively considerate in his dealings with Arabs of the occupied areas. He makes a clear distinction between Arab governments as the source of Israeli troubles and Arab individuals as human beings needing and deserving consideration. He believes, moreover, that Israel's essential goals must remain fixed but that tactics should adjust to changing circumstances. For him, therefore, what was said and done in September need not control words and actions in November or December. Most other Israeli leaders find this disconcerting.

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Rules of the Game

9. Strictly speaking, a member of the Israeli Cabinet is obliged to follow government policy only on issues that have been threshed out within the Cabinet or labeled in advance as requiring Cabinet consultation. Most government departments, however, are subject to considerable control by the Prime Minister's office, audit agencies, and the Knesset (parliament). Not so the Defense Ministry. David Ben Gurion was both Prime Minister and Minister of Defense for 13 out of the first 15 years of nationhood. Eshkol held both jobs for an additional four years. In those circumstances, institutional machinery for control of the Defense Ministry by the Prime Minister's office did not develop. Moreover, neither the financial nor the operational activities of the defense establishment were made subject to close scrutiny by the Cabinet or the Knesset.

10. Dayan has taken full advantage of this situation. Since he became Defense Minister in June 1967, his department has mushroomed in size and importance. It now spends some 28 percent of the GNP of the country and directly or indirectly

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employs a similar share of the working force.* These proportions are expected to continue growing. Expansion of the defense establishment in part reflects a reaction to new circumstances -- continuing hostilities, greater territorial responsibility, and more sophisticated (and expensive) weapons.

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The Defense Minister is responsible for administration of the occupied areas -- easily the most politically sensitive area of domestic operations. Dayan fended off an attempt to water down his authority in this sphere, and he is the architect of most policies toward the occupied areas and their inhabitants. Dayan has also been far more prone than other Cabinet members to express himself -- "speaking personally" -- on any question whatsoever that has not been specifically ruled off limits by the Cabinet.

* At present, about 1.05 million Israelis are employed. Some 92,000 are in the armed forces and 200-220,000 are in defense-supplier industries.

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11. Israeli opinions on negotiations, territorial demands, and steps toward peaceful settlement do not fit into neat categories by political party or government position. Within each of the parties currently represented in the Cabinet, there is a wide range of views on these subjects. The Cabinet position officially conveyed by Dayan will necessarily be only a statement of broad principles to allow room for all opinions. He will be strictly prohibited from making specific new commitments. He will, of course, be empowered to press hard for US diplomatic and military commitments to Israel. He may be authorized to offer some specific suggestions for advancing the negotiating process, such as proposals for new cease-fire conditions. However, his instructions on diplomatic matters are likely to be largely negative -- delineation of terms that Israel will not accept. In the interests of maintaining his Cabinet position and retaining Mrs. Meir's limited trust in him, and with Ambassador Rabin at his side, Dayan probably will adhere strictly to the Cabinet line in his official talks.

12. Were Dayan coming to the US simply as a fund raiser, he would have had considerable freedom to speak out and grab headlines; the resulting publicity could have been a considerable asset in Israel, and there would have been little political danger

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involved. As things now stand, he remains newsworthy and he will undoubtedly get plenty of publicity. But, if he expresses personal opinions on negotiations and settlement that go beyond the official line, he will risk denunciation by other members of the government. On the eve of party elections, accusations that he had weakened Israel's negotiating position could cost him and his supporters many votes. Dayan thus faces several days of verbal fencing with US officials and with the press. It is not a sport he enjoys. His political foes undoubtedly hope that he will botch it.

13. Mrs. Meir, for her part, would not enjoy seeing Dayan become the political beneficiary of any credit that might be gained for advancing Israeli diplomatic interests. Relations between the two are not warm, and they represent competing political factions. They need each other politically, but neither one enjoys the fact. If and when Israel has any plums to offer the US, Mrs. Meir probably would want them to be delivered by Foreign Minister Eban -- who has no domestic political support -- or by Ambassador Rabin -- her loyal supporter and one of her proteges. Any further advance toward clarification of terms that Israel would accept as a basis for discussion with the Arabs, therefore, is likely to be deferred at least until Dayan's visit, and the party elections, are over.

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SUBJECT: ONE Memorandum: "Israel: Keeping Dayan in Line?"

This brief memorandum is not designed to assess the substantive aspects of General Dayan's trip to the US. Rather, it explores some factors within Israel that will bear on his conduct during his visit. We are giving this a limited distribution.

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ABBOT SMITH
Director
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